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NEWS RELEASE

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Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals Mourns Passing of Senior Judge Cynthia Holcomb Hall

SAN FRANCISCO – The Hon. Cynthia Holcomb Hall, a distinguished senior judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, died Saturday, February 26, 2011, after a long and valiant battle with cancer. She was 82.

Judge Hall died at her home in Pasadena with her family at her bedside. She had entered hospice care four days earlier after deciding to forego further treatment for multiple myeloma.

Judge Hall served on the federal bench for 29 years. Nominated by President Reagan, she was appointed to the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California on November 18, 1981, and then to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals on October 4, 1984. She assumed senior status in 1997, but continued to hear cases until her death. The only concession she made to her illness during the last year of her life was to participate in oral arguments by video from her chambers rather than travel to court.

Judge Hall was the fifth woman to be appointed to the court. At the time of her death, she ranked 17th in seniority among the court's 47 active and senior judges.

"Judge Hall was a respected jurist who took strong positions and stood by them. She was a valued colleague and a good friend to many. She will be missed," said Chief Judge Alex Kozinski of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals.

Colleagues remembered Judge Hall not only for her considerable legal talents, but also as a woman of many interests, a world traveler, an avid gardener and an accomplished photographer.

"Cynthia was a true renaissance woman – her photography was that of an artist; her travels and travelogues those of an adventurous soul, remarkable for even a world traveler. She had great tragedy in her life but the strength to surmount it," observed Senior Judge Betty Fletcher of Seattle.

"Judge Hall was the most deeply versatile person I've ever known – a unique, indomitable presence, who was unfailingly generous and gracious as a friend and colleague," said Judge Pamela Rymer of Pasadena.

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Senior Judge Michael Daly Hawkins of Phoenix noted that Judge Hall “brought a beauty, quite literally, to the interior and exterior of the lives of her colleagues. The grounds of the Richard H. Chambers U.S. Courthouse in Pasadena, which she took on as a personal challenge, are among the most exquisitely landscaped of any public building this side of Versailles and her photographs, in black and white capturing the essence of her colleagues and in stunning colors showing our courthouses, are as much a part of her legacy as the cases she decided.”

Judge Richard R. Clifton of Honolulu, who filled the judgeship left vacant when Judge Hall took senior status, recalled her as “a remarkable person, capable of being gracious and blunt at the same time. She had strong opinions and could be direct in expressing them, but she treated everyone with warmth and dignity, accepting beliefs quite different from her own.”

“I take it as an honor to be her successor. She greatly enriched our court, and she will be missed,” he added.

While Judge Hall authored many opinions, colleagues say she saw them as the product of a joint effort of the panel and would not want to be recognized individually for them.

Judge Hall was active in court governance, serving on various committees of the Judicial Conference of the United States and the Judicial Council of the Ninth Circuit. Of particular interest to her was the JCUS Committee on International Judicial Relations, which provided her the opportunity to work with members of the judiciary worldwide.

In addition to her judicial service in the Ninth Circuit, Judge Hall served as a judge of the U.S. Tax Court from 1972 to 1981. Prior to coming onto the bench, she had worked in private practice in Beverly Hills from 1966 to 1972. Earlier in her career, Judge Hall was an attorney advisor in the U.S. Treasury Department’s Office of the Tax Legislative Counsel, 1964-1966; a trial attorney in the tax division of the U.S. Department of Justice, 1960-1964; and a research assistant for the Tax Law Review, 1959-1960.

A Los Angeles native, Judge Hall received her A.B. from Stanford University in 1951 and her LL.B. from Stanford Law School in 1954. She also received an LL.M. from New York University School of Law in 1960. She clerked for the late Judge Richard H. Chambers of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, 1954-1955, and served in the U.S. Navy JAG Corps as a reserve lieutenant, 1951-1953.

Judge Hall is survived by her brother, Lowell Holcomb; her daughter, Desma Holcomb, and son, Harris Hall; her daughters-in-law, Stephanie Hall and Miriam Frank; her grandchildren, Ruth Frank-Holcomb and Carly and Sean Hall; her step-children and their spouses, Jonathan and Dr. Susan Hall, Andrew and Valerie Hall, Nathaniel Hall, and Mary and Stephen Coats; and her step-grandchildren, John, Lydia, Julia, Hayley and Hunter Hall, and Alexander Coats.

The family is planning a private service. A court memorial service will be held at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to the Huntington Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens, 1151 Oxford Road, San Marino, CA 91108, or to St. Edmund's Episcopal Church, 1175 San Gabriel Blvd., San Marino, CA 91108.

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